The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 65, Vol. vi.] BELFAST, MAY 1st, 1886. [For Gratuitous Circulation.

WE would remind our friends that contributions in aid of the gratuitous publication and circulation of the *Chronicle and Index* may be sent to Rev. J. C. Street, who will be glad to acknowledge the receipt thereof.

WHILE we are going to press, the Annual Meetings of the Unitarian Society and Sunday School Association, with special Sermons, Conference, Breakfast, and Annual Meeting are taking place. We cannot report them in our present issue, but hope to give a good account of them in our next. As far as we can now judge, they will prove of a very stirring and interesting character.

OUR readers will share the feeling of sorrow and regret experienced by all our co-religionists in Belfast, in the removal to England of our long-tried and faithful friend, Mr. James M. Darbishire. He has spent an honourable and useful life in Ireland, where his high character and untiring services in all good causes have won for him a position of exceptional honour among all classes of the community. Among the members of our own household of faith he will be greatly missed, for he never seemed to tire in his devotion to all good works. The Church of the Second Congregation, the Sunday School connected therewith, and the Unitarian Society took occasion, before his departure for Liverpool, where, for the future he is to reside, to express their loving appreciation of his character and good works; and he will carry with him the deep feeling that not in vain did he labour for so many years in the land of his adoption. A very pleasing proof was also given to Mr. Darbishire, on the day of his departure, of the esteem in which he is held by men of all parties and churches, in the presentation to him of a testimonial, which was as graceful as it was spontaneous and catholic. We wish him every joy in his new home, and trust that his example may inspire many others to follow in his useful course.

THERE will be rejoicing among all right-minded men, at the great honour conferred by Her Majesty on one of our Unitarian laymen. Sir E. P. Cowan has been made Lord Lieutenant of Antrim, and Mr. Gladstone himself bore high testimony in the House of Commons to his worth, and to the services he has rendered to the Liberal cause in the North of Ireland. We are sure Sir Edward will, with true honour, discharge the important duties which have been laid upon him.

THE Monthly Services for the children were held in Rosemary Street School, on Sunday, April 4th. Mr. Darbishire took the introductory service, and Mr. Street delivered an address on "Serving one another." At the close of the service he presented a very beautifully bound and illuminated book to Mr. Darbishire, in the name of the scholars and teachers of the school. Mr. Darbishire was greatly touched, and responded with much feeling. He said he had spent most happy hours as superintendent of that Sunday School.

The usual service was also held at Hopeton Street, on April 18th, when the Rev. A. Lancaster kindly conducted the service, which was listened to with great attention by all who were present.

THE Mutual Improvement Association has brought its useful session to a close. On April

5th, Mr. Currie submitted a paper on "English History up to the time of the establishment of the House of Commons;" on the 12th, Mr. A. Milligan read a paper on "Population;" on the 19th, Rev. C. J. Street submitted a lecture on "Father Matthew." The discussions which followed were lively and instructive. On the 19th, nominations were made of ladies and gentlemen to serve as officers and committee for the ensuing year. There is to be a closing Soiree combined with the Annual Meeting on May 12th.

Mr. Street has continued and concluded his course of lectures on "How I left Orthodoxy." His subjects during the month of April have been as follows:—

April 4th.—Still grander prospects. No partial rescue, but universal salvation.

April 11th.—Light thrown on the Past. Its uprising towards God.

April 18th.—Divine Light for ever. Increasing happiness, and endless growth.

The course has excited great attention, and much pressure has been brought upon the lecturer to publish the course, but we understand that no decision has yet been made.

Mr. Street's evening services are now over for the season.

UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

A meeting of the General Committee of the Unitarian Society was held at the Depository, on Wednesday, April 21st, at three o'clock. The President, Rev. Thos. Dunkerley, B.A., occupied the chair. There were also present—T. M'Clelland, J.P.; J. F. Mulligan, Rev. J. C. Street, Geo. Fisher, D. Bulmer, Miss May, R. M'Calmont, F.C.S.; Miss G. H. Coe, Mansel Smith, Miss Martin, and Rev. G. W. Bannister.

The Hon. Sec., Mr. Street, reported that the Executive Committee had met 16 times during the year, and the Sunday School Committee 11 times, and that they had diligently transacted the business of the Society.

He also submitted the draft Report to be laid before the Annual Meeting, and the Treasurer read the balance sheet. These were unanimously approved.

A conversation followed respecting various branches of the work done by the Society, and there was a general expression of opinion that the Society was exercising useful functions, and deserved generous and hearty support.

Various suggestions were then made for extending the usefulness of the Society.

The Hon. Sec. next submitted draft of resolutions for the various meetings connected with the Anniversary, and detailed the arrangements which had been made for the Sermons, Conferences, Breakfast, and Annual Meeting, all of which were approved.

The proceedings concluded with the nomination of officers for the ensuing year.

"NOT AS I WILL."

BY JAMES C. STREET.

(Concluded from our last Number).

Now submission is a necessity. We are not masters in this world. We cannot shape its affairs according to our will. Try as best we may, we shall always find there is a power that shapes our end; that a master force takes possession of us and guides us at its pleasure; that the current bears us on resistlessly; that the tides of life carry us with them, and that we must obey. No doubt there is a province within which we can exercise our own will, but outside that, and that means in all the greatest regions of our lives, we do not control but are controlled. What should be our attitude towards this stupendous fact of our experience? Shall we be like foolish and and fretful children who cry out in the night? Shall we be like stubborn and senseless animals that blindly rush on to their own destruction? Shall we act like cold, hard fatalists who sternly bow before the inevitable and accept it as an over-mastering foe? Or, shall we look the laws of nature frankly in the face; stand out in a noble and earnest spirit before the sweeping chariot of necessity, and see in the inevitable the working of a will that cannot err, and of a love that cannot fail?

If we can only trust in God; put our hands in His and go willingly where He leads; sub-

mit to Him, feeling sure that His will is the best; give up our own plans having no doubt the great Master-Builder is working by those that are better and completer; and recognize in all that is done the wisdom and tenderness of a loving Father, our Gethsemane will have brought us into a region of wondrous light, and opened for us the doors of the kingdom of God.

But I cannot express myself half so well as an unknown writer has done in some words I copied out of a book while I was at sea:—

Blindfolded and alone I stand,
With unknown thresholds on each hand;
The darkness deepens as I grope,
Afraid to hear, afraid to hope;
Yet this one thing I learn to know,
Each day more surely as I go,
That doors are opened, ways are made,
Burdens are lifted, or are laid,
By some great law, unseen and still,
Unfathomed purpose to fulfill,
Not as *I* will.

Blindfolded and alone I wait,
Loss seems too bitter, gain too late;
Too heavy burdens in the load,
And too few helpless on the road;
And joy is weak and grief is strong,
And years and days so long, so long;
Yet this one thing I learn to know,
Each day more surely, as I go,
That I am glad the good and ill
By changeless law are ordered still,
Not as *I* will.

"Not as I will;" the sound grows sweet
Each time my lips the words repeat,
"Not as I will;" the darkness feels
More soft than light when this thought steals
Like whispered voice, to calm and bless
All unrest and all loneliness.
"Not as I will;" because the One
Who loved us first and best is gone
Before us on the road, and still
For us must all his love fulfill;
Not as *I* will.

The Treasurer acknowledges the receipt of the following subscriptions for the Unitarian Society for 1885:—

David Young,	Belfast,	.. £0	2	6
J. F. Lowry,	,,	.. 0	2	6
Thomas Andrews,	Comber,	.. 0	5	0
J. O. Abernethy,	,,	.. 0	2	6
Alexander Shields,	,,	.. 0	2	6
James Milling,	,,	.. 0	2	6
Robert Simpson,	,,	.. 0	2	6
F. B. Orr,	,,	.. 0	2	6
David Todd,	,,	.. 0	2	6
James Bailee,	Ballee,	.. 0	2	6
John Chambers,	,,	.. 0	2	6

And for 1886—

Mrs. Russell, ...		.. £2	0	0

We extract the following from the *Unitarian Herald* of April 9th:—

THE REV. J. C. STREET

ON "HOW I LEFT ORTHODOXY."

The course of thought or of personal experience which has led different minds away from the religious home of their youth, compelling them to go out even though they know not whither they should go, must ever be a subject of deep and pathetic interest. Such experiences are very varied. Quite recently we have had the *apologia pro vitâ sua* of several ministers who have joined our own ranks, and, although these may be classified under certain general characteristics, there are no two of them which fall within precisely the same lines. What is called "the Spirit of the Time" has had its influences in all such cases, more or less; but diversities in original training, differences of disposition in the individuals themselves, or in those among whom their lot was cast, have produced striking contrasts in the life-stories they have severally to unfold. One has been educated in a Church of Authority, and his exodus has been a flight from what he has come to feel a spiritual bondage. The irksomeness of its chains has aroused him to the severe struggle required to cast them off. Another, brought up in similar circumstances, but where the home influences have been kindlier, has passed through an even sadder trial. Authority which was not felt to be galling, but rather tender and parental, has turned out to be delusive. Visions of life

which were fondly cherished are found to be but the fantasies of a beautiful dream. An entirely different experience is that of those who have been called by the inevitable voice while pursuing a course of mere studious enquiry. A fresh and free criticism of the old bases of theology, a more candid and thorough examination of the history of men's beliefs, may have revealed such errors in one system, or such unexpected agreements between systems that have long been opposed to each other, as renders it impossible to continue in the faith that any one of them is the exclusive revelation of Truth. Widely different, again, from any of the experiences we have already noticed, is that which has its source in an awakened state of conscience and of spiritual feeling. The old creed which was formulated in times of ruder development gives a shock to the finer sensibilities of a later day. In the struggle of forces under which man has to make his way, the more boisterous, which affect him outwardly, are in the end less effective than the gentle and sympathetic influences which win their way to his heart. Thus, in the pilgrimage of humanity, the traveller while exposed to the wind of Terror only seeks to protect himself and draws the garment of salvation closer around him; but under the sunshine of Love, he throws the cloak away and no longer tries to cover himself from an angry heaven.

Among such varied experiences, one that belongs, for the most part, to the kind we have last described is that of the Rev. J. C. Street, of Belfast, who is giving his congregation, on Sunday evenings, an account of How he left Orthodoxy. The story he had to tell, at its critical point, was that of his revolt against the doctrine of Predestination. He described, for his hearers, the home-surroundings of his early life, so far as these had a direct influence on the change which was by and by to come over him. From this account it is manifest that attractive and repellent forces were together urging him on towards that change; the attraction to it being presented in the character of his father, while the force that tended to drive him from the old religious position proceeded from the sterner nature of his mother, and the gloomy creed in which she seemed to find a refuge in the sad days of her bereavement. Of the former he spoke thus:—

Only dimly, in the early part of my life, can I see the face and catch the sound of the voice of my father. And yet the influence of his life and work seems never to have left me. His personality was such that, after death, he lived a new life in his home and among his children. He was the son of a farmer, but he soon left the homestead and chose his own path of life in a large town. His career was chequered. A workman, a soldier serving in distant lands, again in civil pursuits, an athlete, a lively companion, a Sunday School teacher, a preacher, a worker for the good of man, one of the humble heroes of the world. This was the man. His varied career made his character and conversation picturesque. He was an agreeable and inspiring companion; his lively sallies of wit cheered every assembly where he was, and the intense earnestness of his religious life, after what he called "his conversion," was brightened by his gladsomeness of nature, his hopeful outlook towards the future, and his absolute trust and confidence in God. Many stories are told of his influence over children, and how he gathered them out of the streets and alleys, and in the schoolroom interested them in education and religion; and many a congregation testified to the brightness of his presence and his uplifting words.

This excellent father belonged to the Methodist New Connexion. Mr Street said he had no data from which he could determine how far his father had accepted or cared for any special theological system, but there was abundant proof of his earnestness, his cheerfulness, his trust in God, his confidence in the nature of man, and his belief that the gospel of Christ was meant for the salvation of the world. Mr. Street could but just remember him. Going out one Sunday to preach at a meeting in the country, he was thrown from his horse and broke a blood vessel. He lived for two years afterwards, but was never able to preach again. "But his life was a cheerful sermon."

The influence of a character so strong and large-hearted was not permitted to wane. The mother was never tired of speaking of him to his children, ever holding his example before them. "He was as much the head of the household after his death as he was before."

But along with this a new influence gradually made itself felt. Between the father and mother there was "an element of divergence" which probably did not manifest itself during the life-time of the former, as it did afterwards. But in the years that followed, the widow's mind become overshadowed by a darker tinge of thought. Many of her relations and friends were Calvinists, and she now became closely associated with them. Mr. Street recalls the effect produced upon his mind by conversations among those friends, who "seemed not to have a shadow of a doubt about their own election," while they made it appear to the young listener that "a grim and resistless fate presided over the destinies of the world."

Again and again I heard the words, "He will have mercy on whom he will; and whom He will He hardeneth;" and when any protest was raised, it was stopped by the tremendous words, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

In these conversations his mother was rather a listener than a talker, but a listener deeply and painfully interested. Mr. Street tells how the convictions which had taken possession of her logical mind brought little peace of heart with them:—

Many and many a time did I watch the weary and troubled countenance of my mother. She was convinced, I knew; she could not escape from the conclusions that had been drawn, but she was heart-sore and distressed. Sometimes I thought she was wondering whether she was herself among the "saved." . . . But I soon discovered that her great trouble was about her children. She had had five. One had died as a babe. What of him? Was he among those who in the just counsels of God had been foredoomed to salvation or damnation? Her heart was sorely troubled about her babe. She could not solve the problem. The babe was infinitely dear to her. It had been born when her husband's life was ebbing away, and she loved it with an aching love. The fear, the doubt, was full of horror.

Thus it was that the young boy saw the awful shadow cast over the heart and life of a true, brave woman by a frightful dogma. It aroused in him a sense of rebellion against the dogmatists who talked so confidently about God's decrees. Though he could not answer them, he felt they were grievously and horribly wrong. And there was something in his daily prayer, learnt from his mother's lips, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' which would not fit in with the notion of One who was so unjust, as it appeared to him, as to create people only to torture them for ever. He heard all that was said about Foreknowledge, and how Foreknowledge involved Predestination, and he felt himself in a logical puzzle, struggling with a riddle he could not solve. But the heart of the child revolted, and with the growth of years the man's intellect confirmed the child's revolt. It was then, as Mr. Street proceeded to show, that he was enabled not only to escape from the dogma of a dreadful Predestination, but also from other appalling beliefs which have so long held many hearts in bondage. "I have reason," he said, in concluding this deeply interesting chapter of his life, "to thank God that in my early youth and from amid the sanctities of home, I made my escape from the prison house of a fatalistic creed, and found my way into a larger liberty and a nobler life."

The above passages are from the first of eight lectures, which we hope will be published when the whole course has been delivered.

Young people grow up in our churches who have no opinions of any kind concerning God, Christ, sin, salvation, the foundations of morals, the grounds of belief in the Creator, in duty, or in immortality. Instead of being educated by doctrine, they are fed on sentiment. Instead of truth, they get love. The consequence is that they drift easily into any church, creed, or opinion which happens to attract them. They easily become either Roman Catholics or Atheists, as accident determines. If they meet a Jesuit, they joyfully accept the Pope. If they encounter a disciple of Huxley or Spencer, with equal contentment they reject God. And all this in the interest of liberality and toleration! But know this, that it is impossible to tolerate the opinions of others until you have some of your own. You cannot be charitable to those who differ from you, unless you first differ from them. What sort of toleration does the chip,

floating in the stream, exercise towards the current which sweeps it along? I have heard the story of a young lady brought up in one of our Unitarian parishes in Boston, which seems to be somewhat characteristic. She was visiting some poor Irish families to help them, and she encountered their priest. "You must not think," said she, "that I wish to convert them to my opinions." "What are your opinions?" asked the Roman Catholic. Then it appeared that she had none. But *he* had: so in a short time he had converted her to his views, and she has remained a Roman Catholic ever since.—*Dr. James Freeman Clark* (of America).

A FACTIONAL REACTION AMONG UNITARIANS (IN AMERICA).

WE have spoken of late of the good signs of progress among Unitarians, as, notably, the publication of a volume of the writings of Theodore Parker by the American Unitarian Association. We have also referred to the outbreak of a new conflict in the denomination, particularly in the West, over the question who are to be counted Unitarians. This question has been raised by Mr. Sunderland, the Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, who thinks that that Conference has allowed altogether too much latitude in the direction of the Free Religious platform. He would have a rule established by which both societies and ministers should subscribe to certain beliefs before being admitted to Unitarian fellowship. These beliefs, perhaps, may be accurately summed up under the phrase "Christian Theism." This required creed—for a creed it is—would not have been regarded as very exacting a generation ago. Indeed, probably at that time all recognized Unitarian ministers and societies would have readily assented to the proposition that this statement, or something with even more of Christian dogma, *was* the basis of their fellowship; and, if any had demurred to making it, the demur would have been on the ground that there was no need for them to express such a belief any more than to assert that the sun shines, or probably, too, in some cases on the ground that to make such a statement of belief together, however true, would be contrary to fundamental Unitarian principles. But, to-day, even the simplest doctrines of "Christian Theism" cannot be drawn into a formal statement as condition of Unitarian fellowship without cutting off a number of societies and ministers already recognized as within the denomination.

HOW far this reactionary movement is to proceed and what effect it is to have, it is impossible to say. But it seems likely that it will delay the inauguration of that era of liberty and reconciliation among Unitarians which, it has been prophesied, was soon to come. It has even been said that their next National Conference would follow up the reconciling work which the Unitarian Association has been doing, and remove from its Constitution the long debated theological Preamble. But this can hardly now be expected. True, this movement appears to represent only a faction of the denomination. But it is a faction that is showing a good deal of vigor and zeal. Its leaders are respected for their personal character and denominational loyalty; and all the conservative elements of the Unitarian household—some of them have been in a condition of hopeless quietude of late—will naturally rally around them. If, with such advantages, they do not make a better fight than Mr. George H. Hepworth did for a limiting creed several years ago, it will be proof that the rank and file of the denomination have, indeed, since then made a long advance.

The new monthly publication, the *Unitarian*, of which Mr. Sunderland is the managing editor, is, it is now clear, the organ of this reactionary faction; though it seems strange, with this bias of the magazine so marked, to see Messrs. Robert Collyer and Charles G. Ames announced among the editorial contributors. They have not usually given the influence of their names to any narrow and exclusive denominational policy. In truth, it was difficult at first to believe that Mr. Brooke Herford, who is joint editor with Mr. Sunderland and does much of the editorial writing in the paper, could agree with the latter that Unitarian societies and ministers ought to be bounded by a creed. It has been understood that Mr.

Herford, though well known to be conservative in his own beliefs, was in favor of striking out the objectionable Preamble of the National Conference, and putting no words there that could offend the consciences of any part of the members; and he has done some things since he came to Boston that indicate a disposition to a large and inclusive fellowship. But it would seem now that either he has been misunderstood or has changed his views; for, certainly, his present course is inconsistent with such a position. From some of his utterances and doings of late, it looks as if he felt himself specially called to resist the influence which Emerson has had upon Unitarianism, and to throw himself particularly against the advance of Free Religious ideas in the denomination. One can but respect his earnestness and admire his vigorous activity; but, when it comes to Herford against Emerson, one can but see that it is an ecclesiastic against a prophet, and it needs no great skill to foretell on which side the victory will finally be.

The animus of the *Unitarian* is shown not only by its leading editorial articles, but quite as much by its brief notes. For instance, the old historical church at Northborough, Mass., where Dr. Allen ministered for a lifetime in the spirit of the old-fashioned Unitarian liberty, is called to account, because, in a recently adopted covenant, it omits not only all theology, but the word "worship." In the March number, one of the editors—presumably Mr. Herford—pointedly tells those who cannot come to the work of the denomination with certain beliefs that they are not wanted. This is quite in the spirit of the short-sighted leaders of thirty years ago, who told the young men sympathizing with Theodore Parker's views that the denomination did not want them. But the climax of narrow prejudice and sectarian zeal is reached in a news-note concerning the recent exercises of dedication in the new Unitarian church at Philadelphia. Whoever writes these notes, the editors assume responsibility for them. This is what the one in question says: "The only drawback to the occasion was the part put down on the programme of the opening evening for 'Scripture reading,' which turned out to be a long patchwork of snippets, partly from the Bible, partly from all sorts of authors, ancient and modern. Probably, there were not ten Unitarians in the church who were not ashamed of it." These selections were made and read by Mr. J. H. Clifford, minister of the Unitarian church at Germantown. *Unity*, in view of the *Unitarian's* severe criticism, has published them. They prove to be, as *Unity* says, a "noble" scripture; possibly, too long, but excellent in sentiment, spiritual in tone, and every way appropriate to the occasion. We indorse Mr. Gannett's judgment in *Unity*, when he says: "We should hang our heads in sorrow, if we believed there were ten Unitarians in that church who, listening to this reading, *were* 'ashamed of it.'" No unprejudiced reader of the selections can have much doubt that it was not the sentiment of any of the passages that caused this outburst of criticism, but the fact that they were not all from the Bible. We are pretty sure that the critic who could thus write of these passages uses the Bible as a fetich. If Mr. Clifford had only read entirely from between the covers of that book, no matter how unfitting or unspiritual the selections might have been, would this critic have said that the congregation was "ashamed of it"? Doubtless, not; for he plainly shows that it is the *book*, and not *ideas*, that he reverences.

While the *Unitarian* inside is thus vigorously applying itself to the brakes, that it may stop the denominational advance, on the outside of its cover there is a suggestive advertisement headed "New Books, by Unitarian Authors," and subscribed "For sale by the American Unitarian Association, Boston." Presumably, this was prepared by the secretary of that Association. Not only does the list contain the recently published volume of Parker, but the first-named book upon it is Francis E. Abbot's *Scientific Theism;* another is F. L. Hosmer's and W. C. Gannett's volume of Poems; and another is the present writer's *Twenty-five Sermons of Twenty-five Years*. Now, Mr. Abbot's has always held the theistic views which he holds to-day; but his "Impeachment of Christianity" he has never withdrawn from

circulation. As to Mr. Hosmer, we are not sure, but Mr. Gannett does not call himself a Christian, nor does the author of the *Twenty-five Sermons of Twenty-five years;* and all of them have been in the habit for years of selecting their "Scripture reading" "from all sorts of [good] authors, ancient and modern." Yet, somehow, the American Unitarian Association has come up to the point of classifying them, Mr. Abbott and the rest, as "Unitarian writers," notwithstanding their non-Christian position. But, if Mr. Herford and Mr. Sunderland are right, these men do not belong in the Unitarian ranks at all. There are, evidently, Unitarians and Unitarians,—some *outside* and some *in*. In this conflict between the *inside Unitarian* and the *outside Unitarian*, which will win? The former is making just now the more stir; but the latter has the larger circumference and, we judge, the greater staying power. W. J. Potter.

Religion is radically a consciousness of God, involving various sentiments about Him, but always more or less coupled with a sense of personal obligation to Him. *Religions* are the various modes in which that consciousness is expressed, both as to the intellectual notions concerning God held as doctrines, and the rites, ceremonies, or practices regarded as obligatory, or as deemed pleasing to God.—*Rev. Charles Voysey*

When a word has assumed for very many centuries in various nations a sharply-defined sense, it can only promote confusion and sophistry to try to alter it. We have a right to insist on retaining for "religious" the traditional sense of *devout towards some superior unseen Being;* and if any one is scornful of the belief in a Superhuman Mind, he has no right to deny that he is irreligious.—*F. W. Newman.*

Printed by John A. Murphy, 16, Howard Street, for the Unitarian Society, and Published at their Depository, 16, Queen's Arcade, Belfast.